CLAIMS

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application.

1.   *(Original)* A method for publishing affinity information concerning a user, comprising the steps of:

(a) generating an affinity between a topic and the user, wherein the affinity has an affinity strength;

(b) requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity;

(c) determining whether the user consents to the publication of the affinity;

(d) publishing the affinity to a content catalog if it is determined that the user consents to the publication of the affinity.

2.   *(Original)* The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of determining whether the affinity strength exceeds a threshold, wherein this determining step is performed prior to step (b).

3.   *(Original)* The method of claim 2, wherein steps (b), (c), and (d) are performed only if the affinity strength exceeds the threshold.

4.   *(Original)* The method of claim 3, wherein the threshold is predefined.

5.   *(Original)* The method of claim 3, wherein the threshold is dynamically set.

6.   *(Original)* The method of claim 1, wherein if the user does not approve publication of the affinity, the method further comprises the step of storing the affinity in a profile associated with the user so that the affinity is identified as non-approved.

7.   *(Original)* The method of claim 1, wherein the step of requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity comprises the step of transmitting an e-mail to the user.

8.   *(Original)* The method of claim 1, wherein if the user approves publication of the affinity, the method further comprises the step of storing the affinity in a public section of a profile associated with the user.

9.   *(Original)* The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of determining whether the user responded to the request for approval within a predetermined amount of time measured from when the request was sent to or received by the user.

10.   *(Original)* The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of accessing a policy document that specifies the predetermined amount of time.

11.   *(Original)* A system for publishing affinity information concerning a user, comprising:

means for generating an affinity between a topic and the user, wherein the affinity has an affinity strength;

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means for requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity;

means for determining whether the user consents to the publication of the affinity;

a content catalog;

means for publishing the affinity to the content catalog if it is determined that the user consents to the publication of the affinity.

12.   *(Original)* The system of claim 11, further comprising means for determining whether the affinity strength exceeds a threshold.

13.   *(Original)* The system of claim 12, wherein the means for requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity only does so if it is determined that the affinity strength exceeds the threshold.

14.   *(Original)* The system of claim 13, wherein the threshold is predefined.

15.   *(Original)* The system of claim 13, wherein the threshold is dynamically set.

16.   *(Original)* The system of claim 11, further comprising means for storing the affinity in a profile associated with the user so that the affinity is identified as non-approved if the user does not approve publication of the affinity.

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17.   *(Original)* The system of claim 11, wherein the means for requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity comprises means for transmitting an e-mail to the user.

18.   *(Original)* The system of claim 11, further comprising means for storing the affinity in a public section of a profile associated with the user if the user approves publication of the affinity.

19.   *(Original)* The system of claim 11, further comprising means for determining whether the user responded to the request for approval within a predetermined amount of time measured from when the request was sent to or received by the user.

20.   *(Original)* The system of claim 19, further comprising a policy document that specifies the predetermined amount of time.

21.   *(Original)* A computer program product for publishing affinity information concerning a user, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

generating an affinity between a topic and the user, wherein the affinity has an affinity strength;

requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity;

determining whether the user consents to the publication of the affinity;

publishing the affinity to a content catalog if it is determined that the user consents to the publication of the affinity.

22.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 21, further comprising computer instructions for determining whether the affinity strength exceeds a threshold.

23.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the computer instructions for requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity; determining whether the user consents to the publication of the affinity; and publishing the affinity to a content catalog are executed only if it is determined that the affinity strength exceeds the threshold.

24.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 23, wherein the threshold is predefined.

25.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 23, wherein the threshold is dynamically set.

26.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 21, further comprising computer instructions for storing the affinity in a profile associated with the user so that the affinity is identified as non-approved if the user does not approve publication of the affinity.

27.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the computer instructions for requesting approval from the user to publish the generated affinity comprises computer instructions for transmitting an e-mail to the user.

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28.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 21, further comprising computer instructions for storing the affinity in a public section of a profile associated with the user if the user approves publication of the affinity.

29.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 21, further comprising computer instructions for determining whether the user responded to the request for approval within a predetermined amount of time measured from when the request was sent to or received by the user.

30.   *(Original)* The computer program product of claim 29, further comprising computer instructions for accessing a policy document that specifies the predetermined amount of time.

31.   *(Original)* A system for discovering and publishing a user's affinities, comprising:

usage metric software routines that function to discover the user's affinities;

an affinity publication policy document; and

an approval agent that publishes the discovered affinities in accordance with the policy document.

32.   *(Original)* The system of claim 31, further comprising a profile associated with the user.

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33.   *(Original)* The system of claim 32, wherein the approval agent publishes a user affinity by updating the profile associated with the user.

34.   *(Original)* The system of claim 33, wherein the profile associated with the user has a public portion.

35.   *(Original)* The system of claim 34, wherein the approval agent publishes a user affinity by updating the public portion of the profile associated with the user.

36.   *(Original)* The system of claim 31, wherein the approval agent comprises notification means for notifying the user of a discovered affinity and for requesting permission to publish the discovered affinity.

37.   *(Original)* The system of claim 31, wherein the policy document specifies a timeout period.

38.   *(Original)* The system of claim 37, wherein the approval agent includes

determining means for determining whether the user has responded to the request for

permission within the timeout period.

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